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Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations

Measures to expedite recruitment for field missions, taking into account the delegation of recruitment authority to field missions, including the use of fair and transparent recruitment procedures and monitoring mechanisms

Report of the Secretary General*

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 18 of General Assembly resolution 57/290 B of 18 June 2003, in which the Assembly urged the Secretary-General to report on measures that would expedite recruitment for field missions, taking into account the delegation of recruitment authority to field missions and their accountability in that regard, including the use of fair and transparent recruitment procedures and monitoring mechanisms.

The report outlines the measures taken by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to expedite all aspects of staffing, describes current staffing policies and procedures and reports on the progress made towards meeting the standards of expeditiousness, competitiveness, fairness and transparency in the recruitment process.

* The present report was submitted late owing to the strain put on the limited resources of the Personnel Management and Support Service by the ongoing surge in planning and deployment of new peacekeeping missions.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 57/290 B, in which the Assembly urged the Secretary-General to report on measures that would expedite recruitment for field missions, taking into account the delegation of recruitment authority to field missions and their accountability in that regard, including the use of fair and transparent staffing procedures and monitoring mechanisms.

2. For the purposes of the present report, the term "staffing" is used to denote both the recruitment of external candidates as well as the assignment of serving staff to field missions. The report outlines the measures taken by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to expedite staffing, describes current staffing policies and procedures and reports on the progress made in meeting the standards of expeditiousness, competitiveness, fairness and transparency in recruitment. Additionally, it describes and assesses established policies pertaining to the delegation of recruitment authority to field missions, namely the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor (UNMISET).

II. Staffing of field missions

3. In order to meet the concern of the General Assembly with regard to the efficient staffing of field missions (see resolution 57/290 B, para. 18), the Department of Peacekeeping Operations has developed and gradually implemented a more competitive, transparent and fair staffing and selection process.

4. In developing its staffing procedures, while mindful of the importance of fielding staff in a timely and efficient manner in order to meet operational requirements and mission mandated responsibilities, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations has drawn on the provisions and spirit of documents ST/SGB/277, ST/AI/404 and ST/AI/2002/4 further to enhance procedures for the recruitment, selection and reassignment of civilian field personnel.

5. In keeping with the Organization's overall human resources policies and goals, candidate selections are made on a competitive basis, with due regard to competence, performance records, skills (including language skills and competencies), suitable experience, gender balance and geographical diversity within the respective mission. Competitiveness and transparency have been enhanced through the institution of comparative evaluation processes. The greater involvement of mission management in selection decisions holds them accountable for the timely and efficient delivery of outputs.

6. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations staffing process, which will continue to be streamlined to meet evolving needs, has at its heart the objective of recruiting and retaining high quality personnel to staff peace support operations worldwide. It aims at striking a balance between the needs of the Organization for a multi-skilled, versatile work force, the needs of field missions for energetic, experienced and innovative personnel and the aspirations of individual staff members for career development.

7. Since January 2002, internal and external vacancy announcements, either generic or specific, have gradually become the vehicle for filling vacant posts, particularly in missions that are in their maintenance phase. The establishment of generic job profiles for the majority of mission posts has permitted the consistent presentation of job requirements as well as the systematic evaluation of candidates' qualifications, skills and competencies. Since January 2002, some 1,500 vacancy announcements at the Professional level and some 350 at the Field Service and support levels have been issued on the Department of Peacekeeping Operations web site.

8. It is worth noting that overall global vacancy rates fell from 23 per cent in 2002 to 13 per cent in November 2003, with some missions in single digits. In February 2004, however, further to the increase in authorized post levels for the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and the United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (MINUCI), the vacancy rate rose to almost 26 per cent.

9. The circulation of the majority of mission vacancies on the Department of Peacekeeping Operations web site is designed to provide a transparent and competitive means for the selection of staff. For posts in highly technical occupational groups, targeted searches may be undertaken through access to less traditional sources of recruitment, such as, inter alia, professional associations and national recruitment agencies. For junior support categories, a decision may be taken to rotate or reassign a serving staff member to the vacancy.

10. An integral part of the staffing function is the involvement and substantive role of the field mission throughout the recruitment process. The field mission management will determine, in cooperation with the Personnel Management and Support Service, the job requirements prior to the advertisement of posts and will ultimately select personnel from technically cleared shortlists.

11. In preparing shortlists of qualified candidates for selection by the field mission, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations gives preference to qualified serving staff members of the Secretariat and field missions over the recruitment of external candidates. This corresponds to the Organization's policy outlined in document ST/AI/404, encouraging mobility among Secretariat staff, and the policy contained in document ST/SGB/277, governing a staff member's assignment to, and return from, mission service.

12. These policies promote mobility between duty stations and field missions and enhance career development opportunities for staff. They acknowledge the value and relevance of the skills acquired by serving United Nations staff. They also allow the Organization to retain staff who have benefited from the various training programmes and courses provided.

13. The reduction of approximately 1,000 posts in peace operations from June 2001 to the end of March 2003 placed constraints on the career and mobility opportunities of all categories of serving staff and limited the number of employment opportunities for external applicants. Within operational, budgetary and administrative constraints, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations has given priority consideration to qualified field staff from downsizing, liquidating and liquidated missions for placement into other operations.

14. In the light of recent global developments, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations anticipates a surge in peacekeeping operations in 2004. Specifically, the Department anticipates several new missions in Africa and the Caribbean in addition

to meeting current staff requirements in Liberia (UNMIL) and the possibility of an expanded role in Côte d'Ivoire (the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI)), Cyprus (the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus), Afghanistan (the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan) and Iraq (the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI)).

15. With the likely increase in peacekeeping operations, it is anticipated that personnel requirements for expanded and future missions may result in approximately 2,000 new positions, representing a significant increase in staffing levels from a year ago.

III. Enhancements to Department of Peacekeeping Operations staffing mechanisms

A. Mission planning

16. Further to ensure a coordinated approach to all aspects of mission support, multidimensional Department of Peacekeeping Operations teams take part in mission planning, technical assessment missions and management reviews.

B. Succession planning

17. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations, in consultation with field missions, is working closely to plan for, forecast and manage staffing requirements more effectively. Reports highlighting vacancies resulting from expected retirements and known departures are prepared and reviewed against staff in need of placement owing to downsizing or liquidations.

C. Rapid deployment

18. In February 2003, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations launched the rapid deployment roster, requesting interested Department staff to nominate themselves, via an e-application form, to be available for mission deployment for a period of up to three months. In total, over 6,500 staff members applied for the roster, with a pool of 637 eligible staff members available for team placement.

19. As of June 2003, 283 staff on the rapid deployment roster had been placed against 120 critical mission functions, of which 45 were immediately deployed for start-up activities in UNAMI, MINUCI and UNMIL. While the primary purpose of the roster was to facilitate the more efficient start-up of new missions and to allow time for the recruitment process to take place, the mechanism has also been valuable to assist surge staffing in special missions and in targeting liquidation activities. A second, enhanced rapid deployment roster is planned for the first half of 2004, incorporating many of the lessons learned from the first roster.

D. Vacancy tracking

20. In June 2003, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations implemented part one of an online vacancy tracking and reporting system which enables the Organization to track, monitor and report on all vacancies and staffing actions once

a decision to fill a post has been made. This system merges data from all currently existing databases, providing a comprehensive platform for accurate decision-making and monitoring with regard to the status of staffing actions.

21. The vacancy tracking tool is expected to facilitate further the planning and monitoring of mission vacancy rates and the timely filling of posts.

E. Human Resources Handbook

22. Further to guide mission management and staff in ensuring proper implementation of policies and procedures relating to recruitment in field missions, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations has developed a draft Human Resources Handbook, which is online and user-friendly.

F. Vacancy announcement compendium

23. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations continues to work with the Office of Human Resources Management in refining and streamlining the Galaxy recruitment system for the advertisement of field mission posts. So far, the Department has been unable to use Galaxy fully since the search mechanisms do not allow for refined and sophisticated searches. The system has now been upgraded and is currently being tested. In the interim, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations introduced a pilot vacancy announcement compendium in November 2003. The compendium is an Intranet-based e-application tool to advertise current and projected vacancies in the Professional and Field Service categories in a timely fashion, identifying qualified internal staff for service in field missions as a first priority.

24. Galaxy is an important interface linking the electronic personal history profiles to applications submitted for specific internal vacancies announced under the vacancy announcement compendium. This link simplifies the application process by eliminating duplicate data entry of personal history profiles data.

25. The vacancy announcement compendium, which is open to all staff in the global Secretariat, is designed to enhance and expedite the staffing and application process and the planning of mission staffing. While the pilot compendium was open to internal staff only, future instalments of the compendium will be open to external candidates as well.

26. The vacancy announcement compendium offers a complementary staffing tool from which pre-cleared candidates can be drawn, in particular during surges in field operations. The pilot compendium, which contained the most urgent, critical and voluminous vacancies, was launched for a two-week period and included 81 field positions, of which 66 were for Professional posts covering a broad range of occupational areas. The Personnel Management and Support Service received a total of 7,735 applications from 1,973 staff.

27. It is anticipated, subject to the availability of sufficient numbers of qualified candidates in the respective occupational groups, that pre-cleared shortlists of candidates can be made available to field missions once a vacancy is forecasted. Vacancy announcement compendium shortlists can also be used to fill unforeseen vacancies resulting from resignations, reassignments or non-extension of contracts

quickly. Qualified candidates, pre-screened and technically cleared, who are not selected for a particular vacancy will remain on the compendium roster for a one-year period and will be given priority consideration for future vacancies.

28. An analysis of results generated by the pilot vacancy announcement compendium indicates that it can provide useful trends for human resource planning and post management in terms of sufficient levels of resources or shortfalls in specific occupational groups.

IV. Extension of delegation of recruitment authority to field missions

29. The authority to initiate recruitment of substantive international staff within the governance component was granted to UNMIK in July 2000 and UNMISET in January 2001 on a pilot basis. In these two pilots, the delegation of recruitment authority has improved the timeliness of recruitment, in particular during large-scale surges. This delegation has empowered the programme managers at the field level and increased simultaneously their level of accountability.

30. The outcome was positive overall in both cases largely as a result of the dedicated cell that was established with the deployment of qualified recruitment specialists.

31. In terms of monitoring the delegation of authority, the Personnel Management Support Service has carried out several assist visits to a number of field missions. These visits were aimed at monitoring the correct application of human resources policies and procedures related in particular to processes delegated to the missions and at providing advice or remedial actions, as relevant. The Office of Human Resources Management has also undertaken regular monitoring visits to the various peacekeeping operations to ensure missions' compliance in carrying out delegated functions, including in the area of recruitment.

32. Further delegation of recruitment and staffing authority to the field missions is pending the completion of standard operating guidelines on the revised staffing procedures, sufficient qualified recruitment specialists for all field missions and the institution of appropriate administrative monitoring and evaluation mechanisms at Headquarters.

V. Conclusion

33. Since 2002, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations has made significant improvements in the staffing practices governing peacekeeping operations. In keeping with the goals of the Organization's human resources reform programme, the Department's staffing practices and procedures will continue to be assessed and modified, as required, to meet evolving needs.

VI. Action to be taken by the General Assembly

34. **The General Assembly is requested to take note of the present report.**